

A  
S E R M O N

Preached before the JUDGE

A T T H E  
A S S I Z E S

Held at

N O T T I N G H A M,

On the 19<sup>th</sup> of July, 1689.

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By W. W I L S O N, M. A.

Rector of St. Peter's Church in Nottingham.

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L O N D O N,

Printed for *Avnsham Churchill* at the Black Swan at  
*Amen-Corner*, and are to be sold by *Joseph Howe*,  
Bookseller in *Nottingham*, MDCLXXXIX.

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MEMORIAL

Presented before the JUDGE

OF THE

ASSIZES

IN THE

NOTTINGHAM

On the 12th of July 1889.

By W. WILSON, M.A.

Reader of St. Peter's Church in Nottingham.

LONDON:

Printed by J. Haslam, at the 'Star and Garter' Press, 10, Abchurch Lane, E.C. 4.

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P R E F A C E  
T O T H E  
R E A D E R.

**T**HE Publication of this Discourse is so far from being what was intended, when it was compos'd, that it is wholly owing to the importunate Friendship of some worthy Gentlemen, (to whose Judgment I defer as much, as I value their good Esteem;) who have persuaded me to take this Method to vindicate my self from the Calumnies that some have loaded it with. When first I heard, that it was censur'd, I was not a little astonish'd, that after those Days of Apprehension and Danger, in which we felt much, but fear'd more from that restless Party, who by too much influencing our Seats of Judicature in Cares of publick Concernment; and leavening our Minds with that fierce and bitter Zeal, which does not only spoil the Pleasure, but tends to destroy the very Being of Society; and giving us too plain and frightful a Demonstration how serviceable our Divisions are to their Designs; a Discourse of Justice, Mercy, and a true Zeal for the substantial Duties of Religion, and which above all

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was not only favoured with the Approbation of many Judicious Persons, but particularly of that Honourable Person, who upon the Bench express'd an Impartial Regard to the great Duties it treats of, should be accused and condemned by any that heard it. But not many Hours after it was preach'd, I was inform'd that it was attack'd with Severity enough; as if I had had little or no regard to the Honour of the Church of England. This dreadful Charge put me upon a search, what that untoward Passage might be that had so unluckily escap'd me, as to wound the Reputation of that Church, which I profess my self not only to be a Member of, but highly to honour: But not being able to make the Discovery my self, I was the more easily prevail'd upon to submit it to the Judgment of the World. Is it not for the Honour of the Church, that all her Members should do Justice, love Mercy, and walk humbly with their God? Or, that they should express a greater Zeal for these things, than for her Ceremonies? Is she little beholden to those that are desirous she had more Friends, and fewer Enemies; and especially that those that are and will be her most deadly Foes, had fewer advantages from among our selves to endanger, if not at last to effect her Ruine? Is it an Injury to her to be desirous, that those great and excellent Vertues, the want of which has once almost wounded her to Death, should be more piously regarded by all her Children for the future, than (to the great satisfaction and benefit of none but Rapists) has of late been by many of them? If the pressing of these Things be my Fault, I own it; but am so far from repenting of it, that I bless God for the Opportunity I had to do it. But wishal I must say, that it is neither for the Credit of my  
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*Reprehenders, nor the Churches Honour, to have the inculcating these things pass for a Reflection upon her. For, which the Church is most beholden to, those that consider her Ceremonies, as she her self does, as such indifferent things as may upon just Causes be altered and changed, or they who would have the World believe, that the Church does regard them as Matters as unalterable, and consequently as necessary as the doing Justice, and loving Mercy? they who say that they are not to be esteemed equal with God's Law, or they who by quarrelling with those that say so, as Enemies to the Church, do seem to intimate, that they are persuaded the Church does believe they are? In a word, they who are persuaded that the Religion of the Church of England is that great and noble Thing, that approves it self to the Reason of Mankind, or they who make it so mean a thing as can gratify no more than our Senses, does not need any great depth of Judgment to determine. For I am confident, that no one that reads this Discourse without Prejudice and Partiality, will think the Church of England's Honour in the least concern'd in any thing delivered in it; but will be tempted to believe, that they who have charged it thus foolishly, have no other Religion but what is made up of Ceremony. And if they be such that are offended at it, they, I will own, have some reason for their dislike; because it speaks less favourably of that which is their Religion, than of that which really is so. But I am no way concern'd at it; for I am still of the Opinion, that a Man had as good have no Religion, as such a one as does not consist in doing Justice, loving Mercy, and walking humbly with our God; and that a little more*

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*Charity toward those that differ with us about lesser Matters, will at this time especially do us a great deal more good than all our stiff Zeal for the upholding the Matters in Controversy. And it is certainly very injuriously done to make the Church of England of their Party, when no Person can speak with more Moderation, as to those things, than she has done. All that I shall further add is, That my Adversaries would but be so just to our Church, as to own that the Religion she teaches does consist in Matters of a higher Nature, than a bare stickling for our Ceremonies, and that no Man can be a true Church of England-Man, who is not more zealous for the Essential part of Religion, than the Circumstantial: For such an Acknowledgment will give me all the Satisfaction for the Wrong that is done me, that I desire.*

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M I C A H 6. 8.

*He hath shewed thee, O Man, what is good: and what does the Lord thy God require of thee, but to do Justly, to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*

**A**S the great and excellent Faculties, with which Human Nature is adorned, do evidently demonstrate that Man is a Religious Creature; so the necessity of Religion does plainly appear in this, that all the sensitive

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Enjoyments of this Life, with which the Creatures, that are below us, do rest satisfied, are not sufficient to give satisfaction to the desires of our Nature without it. For take away Religion, and Eating, and Drinking, and all the boasted Pleasures of an Animal-Life, will be so far from making Life easy and comfortable to a Man, that he will labour under infinitely greater wants, than any the sensual Person can possibly complain Religion dooms him to, by forbidding him to humour his Appetite. For we should languish under the Dissatisfactions of our own Minds; and Man by being taught more than the Beasts of the Earth, and made wiser than the Fowls of Heaven, would be only wise to do Mischief. Our Understanding would be the most fatal Instrument of our Misery, and our Wills the great Disturber of our Peace.

God therefore has in nothing given us more lively Instances of the Goodness of his Providence, than in the Methods he has taken to preserve that which is of such Necessity to the Happiness of Mankind. He knows our Frame, 'tis true, and the Necessities of our Nature, and since we cannot live without his care of us, he makes those Provisions for our Flesh as our Bodily Wants do require: But the great Concern, that exercises his Wisdom and Power, are the Interests of Religion, without which he knows all his other Provisions would do little to make us happy.

When we consider indeed how much we ourselves are concern'd in Religion, it may almost seem a wonder that a Providence should be needful to preserve it; that since it is so absolutely necessary to our present Peace and Happiness, to satisfy the noblest

noblest Powers of our Nature, and to prevent those Confusions that without it we are much more obnoxious to than the Creatures that are below us, we should attend to it with so much Sollicitude and Care, that even without the watchfulness of Divine Providence it should never be subject to decay. One would think that a matter, in which we are so much interested, should lie so near our Spirits, and be so much upon our Thoughts, that it should never be in danger of being lost.

But besides, that there are watchful Spirits, that with industry and Sollicitude endeavour to corrupt and destroy it, there is so much Corruption in our Nature, and so much Ignorance and Folly in our Minds, we have so much lost the true use of our Reason, and our Spirits are so much under the Power of Sense and the World, that it is with much difficulty, if at any time we raise our Minds to the Consideration of those Things that are so much above us; so much are our Souls debased by conversing with sensible Objects, that we are apt, upon slender Motives, to exchange Truth for Errour; and having once departed from the true Religion, it is no hard matter to slide out of a bad one into none at all. So that did not the same Providence, that watches over us for our Good, interest it self in the Preservation of Religion, it would long e're this have been as great a Stranger in the World, as the World is to the true Spirit of it. But God, who at first planted the Seeds of it in our Nature, has upheld it by such strong Motives and Powerful Arguments, such mighty Miracles, and Signal Providences, as the Reason of Man cannot but acknowledg to be the Demonstrations of the Spirit and of Power.

Thus

Thus did he of Old restore Religion among the *Jews*, by delivering them out of *Egypt*, and planting them in the promised Land: And when, after so visible a Demonstration of his Power and Goodness, they were still apt to revolt from his Service, he awak'd them to a sense of their Duty, by setting before them the great Things he had done for them. Thus in the Words before my *Text* he expostulates with them, saying, *O my People, what have I done unto thee? wherein have I wearied thee? Testify against me. For I brought thee out of the Land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the House of Servants, and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. O my People, remember now what Balak King of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the Son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal, that ye may know the Righteousness of the Lord.* V. 3, 4, 5. And when by reminding them of those mighty Favours, which were too great to be gainsay'd, and too Powerful to be withstood, he check'd their straying humour, and put them upon a sober Enquiry, *Wherewithal they should come before the Lord, and bow themselves before the high God.* V. 6. *i. e.* by what means they should appease the Divine Displeasure, and atone for their Crimes: he directs them in the words of my *Text* to such an Expiation, as is of more value, and far more acceptable with God than *Thousands of Rams, or ten thousands of Rivers of Oyl. He hath shewed thee, O Man, what is good: and what does the Lord thy God require of thee, but to do Justly, to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*

And indeed there is nothing more just and equal than that those Motives, whereby God does enforce the

the true Spirit of Religion upon us, and those Miracles of his Providence whereby he secures it to us, should put us upon such Enquiries, *Wherewithal shall we come before the Lord, and bow our selves before the high God?* For when Religion is so much our Interest, he by the Methods he takes to secure so great a Blessing to Mankind, and the wonderful Providences by which he endeavours to call up our Minds from those mean and sordid Projects, that pinion them to Mortality, and keep them here below, to the Contemplations of his excellent Majesty, and a lively acknowledgment of his Being, does require that we should *do Justice, love Mercy, and walk humbly with him.*

And as the most grateful return we can make to him, for his care in the Preservation of our nearest Concernment, he requires that we should apply our Minds to the exercise of a most vigorous Piety, and the practice of the substantial Duties of Religion.

*He has shewed thee, O Man, what is good: and what does the Lord thy God require of thee, but to do Justly, &c.*

He has shewed thee what is good. Which Expression we may understand either of the true Nature of that Religion that he requires of us; or of the powerful Motives to it that he does furnish us with. That the true Spirit and Life of Religion does not consist in Meats and Drinks, in the dress of seemingly Spiritual Forms, but in the practice of those weightier matters of the Law, the *doing Justice, the loving Mercy, and the walking humbly with our God:* And that God has given us the most prevailing Motives to excite us to the practice of that Religion that he requires of us.

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So that from the Words I shall beg leave to set before you,

- I. The import of that Religion that God requires of us, as it consists in *Justice, Mercy, and a walking humbly with our God.*
- II. That it is in the practice of these Things, that the true Spirit of Religion does consist.
- III. That the Reason, why Men do at any Time act contrary to these Things, is, not because they are ignorant of them; For God has shewed us what is good.
- IV. That the practice of these Things is highly for our Advantage, and the Benefit of the World: It is the doing what is good.
- V. And *Lastly*, God does require us to do these Things, as he has shewed us what is good.

I. I am to endeavour to set before you the import of that Religion that God requires of us, as it consists in doing Justice, and shewing Mercy, and walking humbly with our God. Now Justice and Righteousness is frequently taken in the Holy Scriptures in a very large sense for the sum of that Duty, which we owe to God; in which sense it extends it self to all the Duties of both Tables. And the Reason may be this; because God in respect of his being our Creatour has a right of Dominion and Sovereignty over us to command us what he pleases; which when we refuse to observe, we are unjust in disowning the Right he has to our Obedience: And the observance of his Commands is stiled, a *doing of Justice*, because we then give that Deference to our Supreme



supreme Lord as is due to him. Sometimes this Duty is taken in a narrower sense for our doing all those Offices, and discharging all those Duties, that we owe to our Neighbour; and in this sense it is limited to the Duties of the second Table. But in its strictest sense it respects only that single vertue which consists in the doing to all Men as we would they should to us, or in the giving to every Man his due. And according to the different Relations, that we stand in to each other the Duties that Justice obliges us to are various. It requires Inferiours to be Modest and Humble; and Superiours courteous and gentle: The People conformable to Laws, and the Magistrates ruling in the fear of God. That Equals and Neighbours be kind and condescending; and all Men govern themselves by rules of equity in their Dealings, and by those of good Nature in their Conversation: That we walk uprightly, work Righteousness, and speak the Truth from our Hearts. *Render to all their dues, saith the Apostle, Tribute to whom Tribute is due, Customs to whom Customs, Fear to whom Fear, and Honour to whom Honour,* Rom. 13. 7. In which words the Apostle sums up that Duty and Homage, that Support and Subjection, that Reverence and Obedience, that is owing to the Persons and Authority of those whom God has set over us. And can any thing be more just and equal than that we should Honour the Person and reverence the Power that protects us? Can any thing be more fit than that we should with the most grateful Minds bless God for the Patronage of those under whose Shadow we live in Safety; and by whose Industry and Vigilance, Order and peace are preserved? that we should by a quiet and

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peaceable Deportment make the burden of Government as easy and light upon their Shoulders as 'tis possible, when they really are what they are stiled, *Nursing Fathers to their People, and the Ministers of God for good?* In a word, that we should bear Faith and true Allegiance to those, to whom we are not only bound by all the ties of Gratitude, but to whom a signal Providence has determin'd it, and the Duty we owe to the Society we are Members of, does require it. For if we must be allowed to suspend our Duty and Allegiance till the Rights of Princes be determin'd, for ought that I know there are few Societies in the World but must of necessity break up; since there are few Princes can pretend to any better Title than what the Sword and Usurpation of their Ancestours has given them; and still fewer whose Possession is settled upon so fair a Foundation as that of their present Majesties. Was there nothing but Possession to be pleaded in the case, I do not understand but a King of *England* may, by virtue of it, claim our Allegiance as fairly, as either *Augustus* or *Nero* did from the Romans. And yet it was with a respect to the latter of these that St. *Paul* required the Roman Christians to subject themselves because of his Possession. *Let every Soul be subject to the higher Powers, for the Powers that are, (i. e. the Powers that are in being, or that have possession of the Crown) are ordained of God.* Rom. 13. And this our great Casuist Bishop *Saunderson* has determin'd to be not only Lawful, but a Duty we owe to our selves, because it is a madness to provoke him that has the Power of the Sword; to our Country, whose Peace and Safety we are bound to consult and take care of; and to him likewise that does

does bear the Sword, since thereby our Persons and Fortunes are protected. Neither does he only give us his own; but St. *Chrysostome's* Judgment in the case, who so interprets the Apostle's Command, *to be subject for Conscience sake*; as if he had said, since every Citizen or Member of a Community is conscious to himself how many benefits he enjoys by the publick Authority, let him know, that as a Recompence for so many Advantages, his Obedience is due to him that has the Government.

But here is not Possession alone, but the Consent of the whole Body of the Kingdom; and I think I may challenge any Prince in the World to shew that his Title does stand upon a better Foundation.

The only thing, that can here be objected, that I can think of, is, that we being under a preceding Obligation: to give our Allegiance to the present King, is so far from being a Matter that in Justice we are obliged to, that it is a great piece of Injustice to him to whom we have formerly bound our selves. And truly I should be apt to think so too, had not that unfortunate Prince suffer'd himself to be so far transported by the evil Counsels of those, whose designs could not be carried on but by the destruction of our Constitution, to invade those Laws by which our Rights are secured, and the Measures of our Obedience stated and bounded. But when he would not be contented with the Obedience that we obliged our selves to, but endeavour'd by alienating a principal Part of his Authority, to make us Traitors to our Constitution, by subjecting our dearest Rights to a foreign Jurisdiction, those that have carried Obedience to the highest, have here made a stand; and I think 'tis a folly to talk of being bound

to give that Obedience which is not only not accepted; but renounced.

But it is not only to the Cottages of the Poor that Justice is confined; but Kings, and all in Authority, may be reminded, that Subjects have their Rights as well as Kings their Prerogatives; and that nothing does make a Government more easy or graceful than the keeping Judgment and doing Justice. 'Tis this does adorn the Diadems of Princes, and make the Seats of Judicatures revered, as well as seated. Whatever unbounded Power the flattering Discourses of Court-Parasites have to their own, as well as the Subjects Mischiefs, complimented Princes with; *David* was as well skill'd in the extent of a Princes power, and had as much reason to be a Friend to the Prerogative as any Man: yet he in his dying words declared (no doubt for the Instruction of, and as a Caution to his Son *Solomon*) that *he that ruleth over Men must be just.* 2 Sam. 23. 3. But now if the Power of the Prince be uncontroulable, and paramount to all Laws, if the Commands of Authority will warrant our Obedience, though there be sin in the Command, what need is there of this Caution that they be just? *David* was certainly mistaken in the nature of Government, when he laid this down as an infallible Maxime; for to be sure he was perswaded that their Commands might transgress the bounds of Justice, and by transgressing their due bounds, degenerate into Tyranny. And indeed all those other Duties that are required of Magistrates, as that they rule in the fear of the Lord; that there be no iniquity with them, no respect of Persons, nor taking of bribes, are so many Limitations to their Power.

And thus indeed Justice it self is limited, when

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we are commanded to shew Mercy. For as necessary and useful a Vertue as Justice is, it becomes an intolerable Grievance by being excessive. And therefore the wise Man requires us *not to be Righteous over-much*. Eccl. 7. 16. not to be too rigorous in the vindicating our own Rights, nor in the executing the Laws upon the Offenders; much less to strain the Laws beyond their due bounds and true meaning; or the making use of them for the depressing a Party that thwarts a corrupt Design. For though it is fit that every Man should be just to himself; yet it is by no means fit that any Man should cross the tender Instincts of his Nature, which are Humanity, Mercy and Compassion. Though it is fit that the Authority and Reputation of Government be upheld; yet is by no means fit, that so sacred a thing as Authority should be made vile by unmanly Passions, or so noble a Vertue as Justice prostituted to base Ends. *To love Mercy, and to do good, are Sacrifices wherewith God and Men are well pleased*: And 'tis much better to err on the mild and compassionate side, than by over-rigorous Justice to approach too near the bounds of Cruelty. 'Tis then only that Justice does stand in the best light, and appear with the greatest lustre, when it is shadowed with Humanity, and qualified with Mercy.

But yet to make it the more lovely, it must be founded upon the more noble Principle of *walking humbly with our God*. For 'tis this that will lay those violent Passions, that are apt to transport us beyond the true bounds of Moderation and Judgment. 'Tis this will make us observe and follow the tenderness of our Nature, and teach us that Humanity and Mercy is the noblest Embellishment of Justice.

Justice. 'Tis this will make us over-look small Faults, and be apt to forgive, or take up with moderate Satisfaction for great ones. The Syriac Version renders it, *Ut sis paratus ad sequendum Dominum Deum tuum*, that thou beest ready to follow or to walk in the Steps of the Lord thy God, imitating him in the slowness of his wrath, and in that Mercy that he thinks of in the midst of Judgment. Or if we take the words as they stand in our Version, they prescribe a Vertue not only becoming us as we are Sinners, and in regard of the transcendent Majesty of the God of Heaven, but most apt to abate those rigorous Excesses of Justice, that do ill become our Nature. For he that is humbled by the sense of that Justice he has provok'd, and that Mercy that he stands in need of, will not take his Fellow-Servant by the Throat for every petty Offence or inconsiderable Debt, when he considers that he has a vast one of his own either to satisfy or to be forgiven. These are Vertues of so brave a temper, that without them we can neither pretend to our Nature nor our Religion. For,

II. 'Tis in the practice of these things that Religion does consist. Whatever less than these things we place Religion in, we not only rudely affront it, but our own Nature. Although the Jewish Religion did not only allow, but oblige that People to external Observances, and for the main of it consist in Sacrifices and other visible Rites; yet the reason why God did institute a Religion of this Nature for them, was not because it is the best in its own nature and most agreeable to the Divine perfections, but because it was the best for them.

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But yet in after-Ages, when the rudeness of their Minds began to wear off, he by degrees did inculcate to them that Religion that was more acceptable to him than their most pompous Service. *Wherewithal shall I come before the Lord, and bow my self before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt Offerings, with Calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of Rams, or with ten thousands of Rivers of Oyl? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my Body for the Sin of my Soul?* These were Enquiries that a Jew, whose Religion did exact from him pompous and visible Expiations, might make. But however God dress'd up a Religion of this Nature for him, yet he tells him by his Prophet, that *to do Justice, to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with God*, are things more becoming humane Nature, and more grateful to the divine. 'Tis certain indeed that Religion cannot be among Men, without some kind of dress; and the more decent and comely it is, the more grateful does it appear to the Eyes of Men. But yet, if while we tithe *Mint, Annis and Cummin*, we neglect the weightier matters of the Law, *Judgment, Mercy and Faith*; if while we eagerly contend for doubtful Opinions, and external Circumstances, we are unconcern'd for the *doing Justice, the loving Mercy, and the walking humbly with our God*, we represent Religion as so poor and lank a thing as the reason of Man cannot possibly stoop to. The exercises of Piety toward God, and Justice and Charity toward our Neighbour, are such lofty and sublime Matters, that an understanding Creature is easily reconciled to a great and venerable Opinion of them; But a Religion that consists only in Theatrical

trical Shows and Pompous Pageantries, in things that only exercise the Body and please the Sense, is fitter for a Beast, that can look no further than to Objects of Sense, than a Man, than is capable of sublime and spiritual Entertainments. Though therefore Religion cannot well be performed without some kind of Rites, yet the fewer they are the better; because the less there is in Religion to please our Senses, the more will our Minds be at liberty to attend to those Spiritual Objects, and the exercise of those Divine Vertues wherein the Life of it does consist.

I will not enter upon the dispute, whether the Rites of our Church be so many, and of that nature, as will justify any one in separating from it; for that will carry me much further, and require more time than a discourse upon this Occasion will permit, or allow me: But this methinks I may say, that since the difference between us is only about Indifferent Things, and our unhappy Divisions have of late like to have undone us; a little more Zeal for Righteousness, Peace, and Christian Charity, and something less on both sides for those things that are not to be weighed against them, would as much become our Prudence as 'tis necessary for our Prefer-  
vation. I come now,

III. To the third thing I propounded; which is, That the reason why Men at any time act contrary to these substantial Duties of Religion, is not because they are ignorant of them. If Men deny either God, or their Neighbours their due, and either impiously affront their Maker, or injuriously disquiet their Fellow-Creature; If any basely fell  
them.



themselves to work wickedness, and by all the Artifices of Fraud and Cunning, or the ruder attempts of Violence and Wrong, endeavour to break down all the fences of Right and Property: If Equals disturb each others Possessions, and by Wrongs and Injuries lay the Foundation of vexatious Law-suits; If Men by open Force, or secret Fraud endeavour to over-power or undermine each other, and there be complainings in our Streets by reason of the Treacheries of the Fraudulent, or the Violence of the Oppressor; If at any time we behold that which the Wise-Man did, *viz. The tears of such as are oppressed, and that they have no Comforter, but that on the side of the Oppressor there is Power.* Eccl. 4. 1. If Subjects by their Murmurs and Complaints render the most easy Government grievous to themselves, and to those that God has entrusted it with; or Princes not content with that just Power, that would make them beloved of their People and dreaded by their Enemies, do fall to digging up Foundations and overturning Constitutions, that out of the ruins of their Peoples Liberties they may erect a Babel of Tyranny and Arbitrary Power; This, I say, is not to be resolved into their Ignorance of that Justice and Mercy that God and Nature do teach and require. No, No, God has shewed us what is good; and if we will do that which is bad, it is because we live by other Rules than those of Religion, and govern our selves by other Interests than those of our present or future Happiness. Men to silence the clamours of an untoward Conscience may perswade themselves, that they do not know they do amiss, when they do such things. But are we such Strangers to God, or our selves? Are the Commands of God to

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keep Judgment and to do Justice, to work Righteousness, and to do that which is just and right, so few or obscure? Are the promises of his Favour to those that do these things, and his threats of Judgment and Vengeance against those that practice otherwise, so much hid from our Eyes? No, No; God has shewed us what is good: and if Men do not do *Justice*, nor *shew Mercy*, it is because their Ambition or Covetousness, their Lusts or their Passions do influence them. But yet how strongly so ever these Vices do prevail in us, and how sturdy soever those Prejudices are that they create, when they do prevail; there is enough in the nature of these Virtues to tempt even a very bad Man to the practice of them, if he would consider them.

IV. The practice of them is highly for our own Advantage, and the publick Interest. *Righteousness exalteth a Nation*, saith the Wise-man: It does so, not only as it procures the mighty Fame of Wisdom and Understanding to a People; which *Moses* told the *Israelites*, would be the great advantage of their Piety, and strict observance of their Laws, *Keep therefore, and do them: for this is your Wisdom, and Understanding in the sight of the Nations, which shall hear all these Statutes, and say, Surely this great Nation is a wise and understanding People.* Deut. 4. 6. But as it makes Human Societies strong and firmly united, neither in danger of being broken by intestine Divisions, nor destroyed by foreign Enemies. When the Spirit of Religion does run through all the parts of a Nation, it becomes vigorous and lively; and like the Body-Natural when Nature is strong, free from apprehensions of a Dissolution:

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But for want of Religion it grows so full of gross and ill Humours, that it languishes and decays insensibly, and, without an Enemy to give the fatal Blow, is ready to expire of it self. But there are two things especially, in which the great advantage of Religion, as it consists in Piety toward God, and in Justice and Mercy toward Men, will appear.

1. That without it the World cannot be kept in any tolerable good Condition.

2. That without it we cannot have any reasonable hope to see Things settle well again, when once out of Order.

1: Without it the World cannot be kept in any tolerable good Condition. The Exigencies of Human Nature, and the Defects, if not the ill use of Human Wisdom, do make it necessary that the World should be under so great Wisdom and Power as that of the Almighty. And since it is only Piety that can engage the Divine Favour and Protection towards us, what a World of Mischief must we bring upon our selves, if by a neglect thereof we provoke him to withdraw his Providence from us? If we overlook our own Infirmities and Sins; and demean our selves before him with so much Haughtiness and Pride, as if we stood not in need either of his Power to support, or his Mercy to pardon, we justly provoke him to let us see our Vanity by leaving us to our own Wisdom and Prudence.

And was there no such thing as Justice or Mercy in the World, there could be no Amity nor Friendship, no Peace, and consequently no Society. Man to Man would be more savage than Brutes, and the World an *Aceldama*, or Field of Blood and Confusion. There would be no Obedience paid to the lawful

Commands of Magistrates, no Defence and Protection afforded to Subjects; no Respect nor Reverence to Superiours, nor Courtesy and Affability to Inferiours, no Kindness nor Familiarity among Equals; no Mercy or Compassion to those in Distress, nor Tenderneſs of each others Concerns; no Regard to Promiſes or Contracts, to Oaths or the ſtrongeſt Obligations; but every Man would be at liberty to make the beſt uſe of Power and Opportunity for the advancing his own Fortune. Conſcience would be an empty Name, Intereſt the only ruling Principle and every action lawful that conduced to the accompliſhing a Deſign. For without Juſtice, nothing would be a Man's Duty; and without Mercy, no Benefit could be expected from Society: but all thoſe Fences wherewith Religion does bound Mens Appetites and Paſſions would be thrown down, and all thoſe Bands that tie their Hands and Tongues broken. So that Mens Hearts would be fraudulent and deceitful, their Throats an open Sepulchre, and the Poyſon of Aſps under their Lips. Their Mouths would be full of Curſing and Bitterneſs, their Teeth Spears and Arrows, and their Tongues ſharp Swords: Their Words might be ſmooth but falſe, their Feet ſwift to ſhed Blood, their Hands ready to execute any villanous Deſign, and all the Members of their Bodies Inſtruments of Unrighteouſneſs. This would be the ſad ſtate that the want of Juſtice and Mercy would reduce Societies to, and God by creating Man a Sociable Creature would have done infinitely worſe for him than if he had only made him an Inhabitant of a Wilderneſs. That Appetite, which he deſign'd for the great Bleſſing and Ornament of his Nature, would have proved his Curſe, and the unhappy

happy occasion of more Misery than all that the Beasts of the Field are subject to: Neither could any thing remedy this Evil but the restoring of Justice and Mercy to the World. For,

2. 'Tis not possible the World, when disorder'd, should settle again without them. 'Tis only these Vertues can make Society desirable, and the Habitation of a Neighbour beneficial to us. In all the Distempers of the Body-Natural, the Cure is wrought by removing the Cause; and till that be done, the Body will languish in spite of the Physician, or the Strength of Cordials. And unless the same course be taken in the Distempers of Civil-Bodies, 'tis not to be expected to see them return to their former strong and vigorous State. They will continue sickly and weak so long as those ill Humours do overburthen it, which are not to be discharged but by *doing Justice, shewing Mercy, and walking humbly with our God*. For by a sincere Piety the Wisdom of God is engaged to preside over, and direct those Counsels, which without it must of necessity be confused and distracted; and Divine Providence, without which Mischief comes upon Mischief, Rumour upon Rumour, and *Men seek Peace but find none*, as the Prophet Ezekiel speaks, returns to the Helm, that it hath forsaken; and safely conducts so penitent a People out of the Intricacies and Mazes they were lost in.

And by Justice and Mercy Mens Minds are freed from those Jealousies and Distrusts, that the contrary Vices do occasion. By being just, Mens Minds are set at ease from those Apprehensions, that fill them with Anguish and Convulsions; and by shewing Mercy, we feel the benefits of Society, and that  
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it is good for us that we were fitted for it. For when we have nothing to fear, but a great deal to hope for from our being united into civil Communities, then Friendship and Charity do so strongly cement them, that it is not in the Power of Men or Devils to shake or endanger them. It is observable, that the usual Method of those who project the ruine of a State, is by straitning and limiting the publick Justice, to create Parties; and by destroying Humanity and Mercy, to heighten Animosities: And the only way to heal a distemper'd State, is to remove those Mounds and Works, that have thrown Injustice with too much weight and severity upon one side, while the other has seem'd to be tolerated to do mischief; and to put on those Bowels of Mercy and Compassion which will blunt the edge of the keenest Rage, and reconcile the most divided Spirits. For then will our *Peace be as a River, when Righteousness does run down as the Waves of the Sea, and Mercy and Truth do meet together.* And as these Vertues are of so great advantage to the World; So,

V. God has taken care to recommend them to our practice, by shewing us what is good. He has shewed us what is good, as by our reasonable Nature he has fitted us for Society; which, as long as Justice and Mercy do flourish, will afford us mighty helps and advantages for the promoting our Affairs. In this he has advanced our Nature above the Condition of those wild and savage Creatures, that howl in Wildernesses, and creep into holes and caves of the Earth. In this he has done us so much good, that 'tis but little more that he has done for the Angels,

Angels, those glorious Inhabitants of the City of the living God. And since God has shewed us this good, is it not highly reasonable that we should live up to the Primitive intention of our Creatour, and take care of those great advantages that he has put into our Hands? Is it not fit that we should consult our own Interest, and make as much of that Good that God has shewn us as possibly we may? In this then God does recommend Justice and Mercy to our Practice, as he has planted such an Appetite in us as can no ways be satisfied without them.

But, blessed be his Name, he has furnished us with another Motive, as in the late wonderful and unexpected Revolution, he has to a Miracle shewed us what is good. For he has revived our Laws which began visibly to languish and faint under the dreadful weight of a dispensing Power; and has preserved our Religion, that requires us to *do Justice, to shew Mercy, and to walk humbly with our God*, from the overflowings of Superstition and Idolatry; and our Constitution from the secret Underminings and open Attempts of an Arbitrary Despotick Government: He has taken the Crafty in their own Counsels, and turned those that had the reputation of the greatest States-Men, backwards: He, I say, when all places were full of Fears and dismal Apprehensions, and all Faces gather'd blackness for the dread of those Evils that were ready to break in upon us; when Justice was made a dead weight to sink and oppress those that durst be true and faithful to the Interests of their Country, and the Mercies of Men were cruel; when the Will of a Prince that had unhappily given himself up to the conduct of Priests and Jesuits, was the sole Director  
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of the Bench, and Judgments were given without any Rule or Measure, but the Interests of a Party, who depended more upon Oppression and Violence for the carrying on their Designs, than either the goodness of their Cause, or the strength of their Arguments; He, I say, when our Religion, our Laws, and Liberties, all the dear Concernments both of this Life and that which is to come, were doom'd to perpetual bondage, under Popery, and Arbitrary Power, was pleas'd to raise us up a Deliverer, who hath done great things for us, for which we and Generations after us have cause to rejoyce, and to bless the Lord.

Had any Man told us some Months before God wrought this great Deliverance for us, that he had seen our Affliction, and heard our Cry, and would come down to deliver us in so easy and cheap a way as that which we have seen, would not his Words have seem'd to us, as the first notice of Christ's Resurrection did to his Disciples, like idle Tales? But tho we were like them that dream, when the Lord turned our Captivity, yet we ought not to be so still, when we reap the Fruits and enjoy the Benefits of so great a Blessing. No, God has shewed us what is good, he has put us under an easy, and truly English Government, a Government that knows no Rule but our Laws, nor no other End but the Peace and Prosperity of our Country, the Safeguard and Protection of our Persons, the Preservation of our Rights and Liberties, and above all the Encouragement of Vertue, and the upholding the Protestant Interest; and *what now does the Lord our God require of us, but to do Justice, to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with our God?*

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This is that Return that he expects from us for so great a Blessing ; that Return that in gratitude we are obliged to make, and which will fully compleat our Deliverance. For then will our Enemies despair of ever seeing their Designs upon us compassed, when they see our Distractions healed, our Animosities laid, and the Hearts of English-Men united by Love and Friendship. Then will their Malice find no matter to work upon, nor no Party whose discontents shall furnish them with means to engage them in designs against the Interests of their Religion and their Country. Then we need no more fear the Arts of Jesuites, nor the Power of *France*. For nothing can destroy *England* but its being crumbled into Parties ; and nothing will contribute more to the removing all Discontents, and the extirpating that Bitterness which has of late so much shook the Foundations of our Peace, as that *Justice, Mercy, and humble walking with God*, that will make God a Friend to Man, and every Man as a God to his Neighbour. For who is he that will harm us, if we be followers of that which is good ? Who is it that we need to fear, if from the sense of the good that God has shown us we learn to walk more humbly with him, and by a more serious regard to Piety engage him to be our Guardian and Protector ? Nay who will dare to attempt upon our Peace, if they see that we dwell under the Shadow of the Almighty, and see us as wise to countertermine their designs by acts of Justice, Mercy and Humanity, as they are to prosecute them by first sowing Divisions, and then exasperating them by leavening Mens Souls with a Spirit of Oppression and Violence, Inhumanity and Cruelty ? They

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could

could never have put us into so much dread; had not our own unhappy Heats prepared them Parties, who for wreaking a little Spight, easily, as they were complemented, closed in with the advantage of being countenanced at Court: And there is nothing that for the future will so perfectly remove our Fears, as that Justice and Mercy that will unite our Interests, and reconcile our Hearts. For how is it possible there should be Heats and Animosities among Men, when no Man has any cause of Apprehensions from another? How shall any Man converse with Disguise or Jealousy, when he knows of none that will do him harm? So long as Justice is the governing Principle among Men, Superiours need not fear any ill from their Inferiours; because this Vertue will incline them to give them all Honour and Reverence that is their due: Nor need Inferiours have any dread of the Power of those above them; because this Vertue joined with Mercy will dispose them to use it for their Defence: And no Man need to have a Guard upon himself, for fear of any Person he converses with; because every Man will be kind and good-natured. Then will our Seats of Judicature be revered. And since it is impossible but such Differences will arise among the most honest and just Persons, as can no otherwise be determined but in a Court of Judicature; then no Man will be afraid of submitting his Cause to the Judgment of a Court, when both Witnesses and Jurors do swear an Oath, and give their Testimonies and their Verdicts according to Truth and Righteousness.

And O that in this our Day, in which God by having shewn us what is good, does seem to put us upon the trial, whether we will do our selves good; and

and in which, from the Example of a pious and good Prince, we have all the Encouragements that a People can desire to Piety, Justice and Charity, we would study to know these things, that make so much for our Peace and Happinels. For the obtaining of which great Blessing, may it please the God of Mercy and Love to give us the Grace and Wisdom to apply our Minds to know the import and advantage of those great Vertues of Piety, Justice and Mercy, which, for the good he has shown us, he requires of us, for the Sake of his beloved Son, and our gracious Mediatour and Redeemer ; To whom with thee, O Father, and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed all Honour and Glory, now and for ever.

*Amen.*

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**F I N I S.**